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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1700  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL IMMEDIATE 6765  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH// IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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RUEHAK/TSR ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE  
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000071

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [OSCE](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: DIYARBAKIR SEES LITTLE HOPE FOR DEMOCRATIC OPENING

REF: A. 09 ADANA 80

[1](#)B. 09 ADANA 82

Classified By: Adana Principal Officer Daria Darnell for reasons 1.4(b, d)

This is a Consulate Adana cable.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Recent arrests of Kurdish politicians and community leaders have created a climate of tension among Kurds in Diyarbakir. Kurdish businesspeople and NGO employees worry that they too could be arrested regardless of their political beliefs and lack of ties to the PKK. Contacts told us they blame the AKP for both the recent arrests and for the failure of the Democratic Opening. One contact told us he believed the government could still salvage the opening, but others are convinced that only early elections offer a solution to the crisis. End summary.

Recent Arrests Cause Kurds to Lose Trust in AKP  
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[1](#)2. (C) As reported in refs A and B, the recent arrests of Kurdish leaders, especially elected mayors, has led even moderate Kurds to worry about their futures. Several contacts, including president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Galip Ensarioglu, GUNSIAD president Ismail Bedirhanoglu, and NGO director Nurcan Baysal, told us the sight of their elected officials in handcuffs shocked them and made them wonder if they could be arrested (Note: all three have been active in politics to varying degrees and speak out on Kurdish issues. End note.). In several meetings contacts told us they were sure the Government of Turkey (by which they meant the AKP) had approved the arrests. One human rights attorney told us, "The police would never have made the arrests without the knowledge of the Justice Minister and the Interior Minister." The distrust extends to Kurdish AKP members, described by Diyarbakir mayor Osman Baydemir as traitors to the Kurdish people who were working against the Kurdish cause. The December 11 closure of the DTP was also seen as a betrayal of the AKP's claims to support the Democratic Opening. The governor of Diyarbakir defended the arrests and the party closure, pointing out they were carried out in accordance with Turkish law by independent judicial officials.

What the AKP Could Have Done Differently  
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13. (C) Interlocutors criticized the AKP's overall handling of the opening. Bedirhanoglu and Ensarioglu said the AKP should have quickly announced concrete steps toward democratization -- expanded language rights, for example, or officially changing Turkish names of towns to Kurdish names -- when PM Erdogan began discussing the opening in summer 2009. The lack of details from the government led them to question the AKP's sincerity. Our interlocutors also criticized the AKP's unwillingness to discuss the opening with the PKK. Two interlocutors -- Bedirhanoglu and attorney Meral Danis -- said the AKP "could have talked secretly with the PKK." Danis along with Baysal said the AKP could not expect the Kurdish people to ignore the PKK when "our children and brothers are still in the mountains."

#### What the Kurds Could Have Done Differently

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14. (C) Some of our contacts conceded the DTP and the Kurds could have acted differently as well. They acknowledged the DTP's continued links to the PKK and insistence on the primacy of Ocalan -- offering as evidence PKK members' attendance at the Democratic Society Congress in June 2009 -- placed the government in a difficult position. The killing of seven soldiers in Tokat in December by an undisciplined PKK unit was also acknowledged as a mistake that could have triggered the arrests (Note: In two separate meetings contacts told us many Kurds persist in believing the state was behind the killings in Tokat, despite PKK claims of responsibility.) At the same time Bedirhanoglu said the

ANKARA 00000071 002 OF 002

Kurds need a viable alternative to former DTP and new BDP, but such an alternative does not exist. HAKPAR (a minor Kurdish political party) chair Bayram Bozyel presented his party to us as an alternative to the BDP and unsupportive of the PKK. He also told us his party favors federalism, although he was unable to define what a federalist system would look like. Other contacts were dismissive of HAKPAR's chances of success, both because of its limited support from the Kurdish people and because few Kurds want a federalist system.

15. (C) Some of our interlocutors did not suggest any different steps Kurds or the DTP could have taken. When asked what both the AKP and the DTP could have done differently since the start of the discussions on the Democratic Opening, Mayor Baydemir was quick to list what he considered to be the AKP's mistakes (such as the failure to propose concrete changes in laws) but did not have any suggestions for a different Kurdish approach. He said he had told the people of Diyarbakir they should "be like Gandhi" and not engage in violent protests.

#### What's Next for the Democratic Opening?

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16. (C) Our contacts were almost uniformly pessimistic about the future of the Democratic Opening, expressing doubt that the AKP could overcome the Kurds' distrust or convince the opposition parties to support the opening. Bedirhanoglu was an exception, saying he believed the AKP would make six to eight concrete proposals in January they could enact in the short-term, such as changing the way the cases of children who throw stones during demonstrations are handled, expanding language rights and return the names of villages, and that could get the opening back on track. Most of our interlocutors, however, had opinions closer to that of attorney Mesut Bektas, who said he believed the AKP should call early elections because "they are finished, and nothing will change until they are gone." When asked what type of government would likely be elected, he told us, "I don't care -- I just want this one gone." Contacts also expressed concern about radicalization of young Kurds and more recruits for the PKK.

17. (C) Comment: It is clear that - no matter the legal justifications for either the DTP closure or the recent arrests of political leaders - most Kurds are deeply distrustful of the GOT's intentions. It is also clear many Kurds are unwilling to break completely from the PKK and Ocalan and to denounce violence publicly. AKP officials in recent days have said they intend to propose in the Parliament this week a concrete set of steps to advance the Democratic Opening. Without such a proposal, and absent a strong denunciation of the PKK's terror tactics from a Kurdish leader, the gulf between the GOT and Kurds seems likely to widen.

Jeffrey

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